

The three divisions of the Logic:

Being, Essence and Notion

Hegel reading texts given by Andy Blunden

“In the sphere of Essence one category does not pass into another, but refers to another merely. In Being, the forms of reference is purely due to our reflection on what takes place: but it is the special and proper characteristic of Essence. In the sphere of Being, when somewhat becomes another, the somewhat has vanished. Not so in Essence: here there is no real other, but only diversity, reference of the one to its other. The transition of Essence is therefore at the same time no transition: for in the passage of different into different, the different does not vanish: the different terms remain in their relation. When we speak of Being and Nought, Being is independent, so is Nought. The case is otherwise with the Positive and the Negative. No doubt these possess the characteristic of Being and Nought. But the Positive by itself has no sense; it is wholly in reference to the negative. And it is the same with the negative.

“In the sphere of Being the reference of one term to another is only implicit; in Essence on the contrary it is explicit. And this in general is the distinction between the forms of Being and Essence: in Being everything is immediate, in Essence everything is relative.” (*Shorter Logic*, §111n)

“What is rational is real; And what is real is rational. Upon this conviction stand not philosophy only but even every unsophisticated consciousness. From it also proceeds the view now under contemplation that the spiritual universe is the natural. When reflection, feeling or whatever other form the subjective consciousness may assume, regards the present as vanity, and thinks itself to be beyond it and wiser, it finds itself in emptiness, and, as it has actuality only in the present, it is vanity throughout. Against the doctrine that the idea is a mere idea, figment or opinion, philosophy preserves the more profound view that nothing is real except the idea. Hence arises the effort to recognise in the temporal and transient the substance, which is immanent, and the eternal, which is present. The rational is synonymous with the idea, because in realising itself it passes into external existence.” [*The Philosophy of Right*, Preface]

“The state is the actuality of concrete freedom. But concrete freedom consists in this, that personal individuality and its particular interests not only achieve their complete development and gain explicit recognition for their right (as they do in the sphere of the family and civil society) but, for one thing, they also pass over of their own accord into the interest of the universal, and, for another thing, they know and will the universal; they even recognise it as their own substantive mind; they take it as their end and aim and are active in its pursuit.” [*The Philosophy of Right* §260, The State]

“In the course of this work of the world mind, states, nations, and individuals arise animated by their particular determinate principle which has its interpretation and actuality in their constitutions and in the whole range of their life and condition. While their consciousness is limited to these and they are absorbed in their mundane interests, they are all the time the unconscious tools and organs of the world mind at work within them. The shapes which they take pass away, while the absolute mind prepares and works out its transition to its next higher stage.” [*The Philosophy of Right* §344, The State]

¶ 190. The master is the consciousness that exists *for itself*; but no longer merely the general notion of existence for self. Rather, it is a consciousness existing on its own account which is mediated with itself through an other consciousness, i.e. through an other whose very nature implies that it is bound up with an independent being or with thinghood in general. The master brings himself into relation to both these moments, to a thing as such, the object of desire, and to the consciousness whose essential character is thinghood. And since the master, is (a) *qua* notion of self-consciousness, an immediate relation of self-existence, but (b) is now moreover at the same time mediation, or a being-for-self which is for itself only through an other — he [the master] stands in relation (a) immediately to both, (b) mediately to each through the other. The master relates himself to the bondsman mediately through independent existence, for that is precisely what keeps the bondsman in thrall; it is his chain, from which he could not in the struggle get away, and for that reason he proved himself to be dependent, to have his independence in the shape of thinghood. The master, however, is the power controlling this state of existence, for he has shown in the struggle that he holds it to be merely something negative. Since he is the power dominating existence, while this existence again is the power controlling the other [the bondsman], the master holds, *par consequence*, this other in subordination. In the same way the master relates himself to the thing mediately through the bondsman. The bondsman being a self-consciousness in the broad sense, also takes up a negative attitude to things and cancels them; but the thing is, at the same time, independent for him and, in consequence, he cannot, with all his negating, get so far as to annihilate it outright and be done with it; that is to say, he merely works on it. To the master, on the other hand, by means of this mediating process, belongs the immediate relation, in the sense of the pure negation of it, in other words he gets the enjoyment. What mere desire did not attain, he now succeeds in attaining, viz. to have done with the thing, and find satisfaction in enjoyment. Desire alone did not get the length of this, because of the independence of the thing. The master, however, who has interposed the bondsman between it and himself, thereby relates himself merely to the dependence of the thing, and enjoys it without qualification and without reserve. The aspect of its independence he leaves to the bondsman, who labours upon it.

‘*The Phenomenology*’ §190, 1807

“The foregoing shows quite clearly the reason why the beginning cannot be made with anything concrete, anything containing a relation *within itself*. For such presupposes an internal process of mediation and transition of which the concrete, now become simple, would be the result. But the beginning ought not itself to be already a first *and* an other; for anything which is in its own self a first *and* an other implies that an advance has already been made. Consequently, that which constitutes the beginning, the beginning itself, is to be taken as something unanalysable, taken in its simple, unfilled immediacy, and therefore *as being*, as the completely empty being.” (*Science of Logic*, p. 75)

“In the history of philosophy the different stages of the logical idea assume the shape of successive systems, each based on a particular definition of the Absolute. As the logical Idea is seen to unfold itself in a process from the abstract to the concrete, so in the history of philosophy the earliest systems are the most abstract, and thus at the same time the poorest. The relation too of the earlier to the later systems of philosophy is much like the relation of the corresponding stages of the logical Idea: in other words, the earlier are preserved in the later: but subordinated and submerged. This is the true meaning of a much misunderstood phenomenon in the history of philosophy — the refutation of one system by another, of an earlier by a later. Most commonly the refutation is taken in a purely negative sense to mean that the system refuted has ceased to count for anything, has been set aside and done for. Were it so, the history of philosophy would be, of all studies, most saddening, displaying, as it does, the refutation of every system which time has brought forth. Now although it may be admitted that every philosophy has been refuted, it must be in an equal degree maintained that no philosophy has been refuted. And that in two ways. For first, every philosophy that deserves the name always embodies the Idea: and secondly, every system represents one particular factor or particular stage in the evolution of the Idea. The refutation of a philosophy, therefore, only means that its barriers are crossed, and its special principle reduced to a factor in the completer principle that follows.

“Thus the history of philosophy, in its true meaning, deals not with a past, but with an eternal and veritable present: and, in its results, resembles not a museum of the aberrations of the human intellect, but a Pantheon of godlike figures. These figures of gods are the various stages of the Idea, as they come forward one after another in dialectical development.

“To the historian of philosophy it belongs to point out more precisely how far the gradual evolution of his theme coincides with, or swerves from, the dialectical unfolding of the pure logical Idea. It is sufficient to mention here, that logic begins where the proper history of philosophy begins. Philosophy began in the [Eleatic](#) school, especially with Parmenides. Parmenides, who conceives the absolute as Being, says that ‘Being alone is and Nothing is not’. Such was the true starting point of philosophy, which is always knowledge by thought: and here for the first time we find pure thought seized and made an object to itself.” (*Shorter Logic*, §86n2)

“‘Thought, and that on account of which thought is, are the same. For not without that which is, in which it expresses itself, wilt thou find Thought, seeing that it is nothing and will be nothing outside of that which is.’ [and Hegel comments] That is the main point. Thought produces itself, and what is produced is a Thought. Thought is thus identical with Being, for there is nothing beside **Being**, this great affirmation.” (*History of Philosophy*, D1)

“For Heraclitus says: ‘Everything is in a state of flux; nothing subsists nor does it ever remain the same’. And Plato further says of Heraclitus: ‘He compares things to the current of a river: no one can go twice into the same stream’, for it flows on and other water is disturbed. Aristotle tells us that his successors even said ‘it could not once be entered’, for it changed directly; what is, is not again. Aristotle goes on to say that Heraclitus declares that ‘there is only one that remains, and from out of this all else is formed; all except this one is not enduring’. This universal principle is better characterized as **Becoming**, the truth of Being.” (*History of Philosophy*, D1)

“Being is being, and nothing is nothing, only in their contradistinction from each other; but in their truth, in their unity, they have vanished as these determinations and are now something else. Being and nothing are the same; *but just because they are the same they are no longer being and nothing*, but now have a different significance. In becoming they were coming-to-be and ceasing-to-be; in **determinate being**, a differently determined unity, they are again differently determined moments.” (*Science of Logic*, §187)

“**Quality** may be described as the determinate mode immediate and identical with Being — as distinguished from Quantity (to come afterwards), which, although a mode of Being, is no longer immediately identical with Being, but a mode indifferent and external to it. A something is what it is in virtue of its quality, and losing its quality it ceases to be what it is.” (*Shorter Logic*, § 90n)

Course: Hegel

22052, Hegel, Excerpts on Being, Essence and Notion

1964 words